

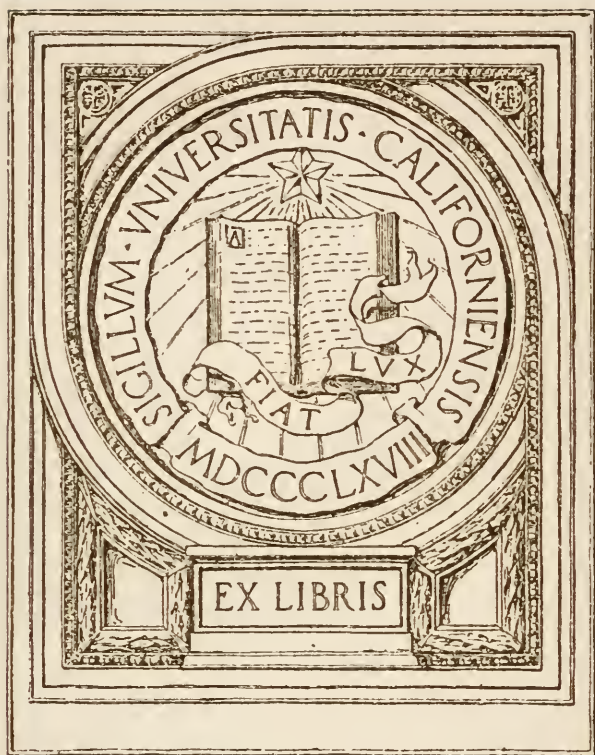
AFRICAN ITEMS

PERCEVAL GIBBON

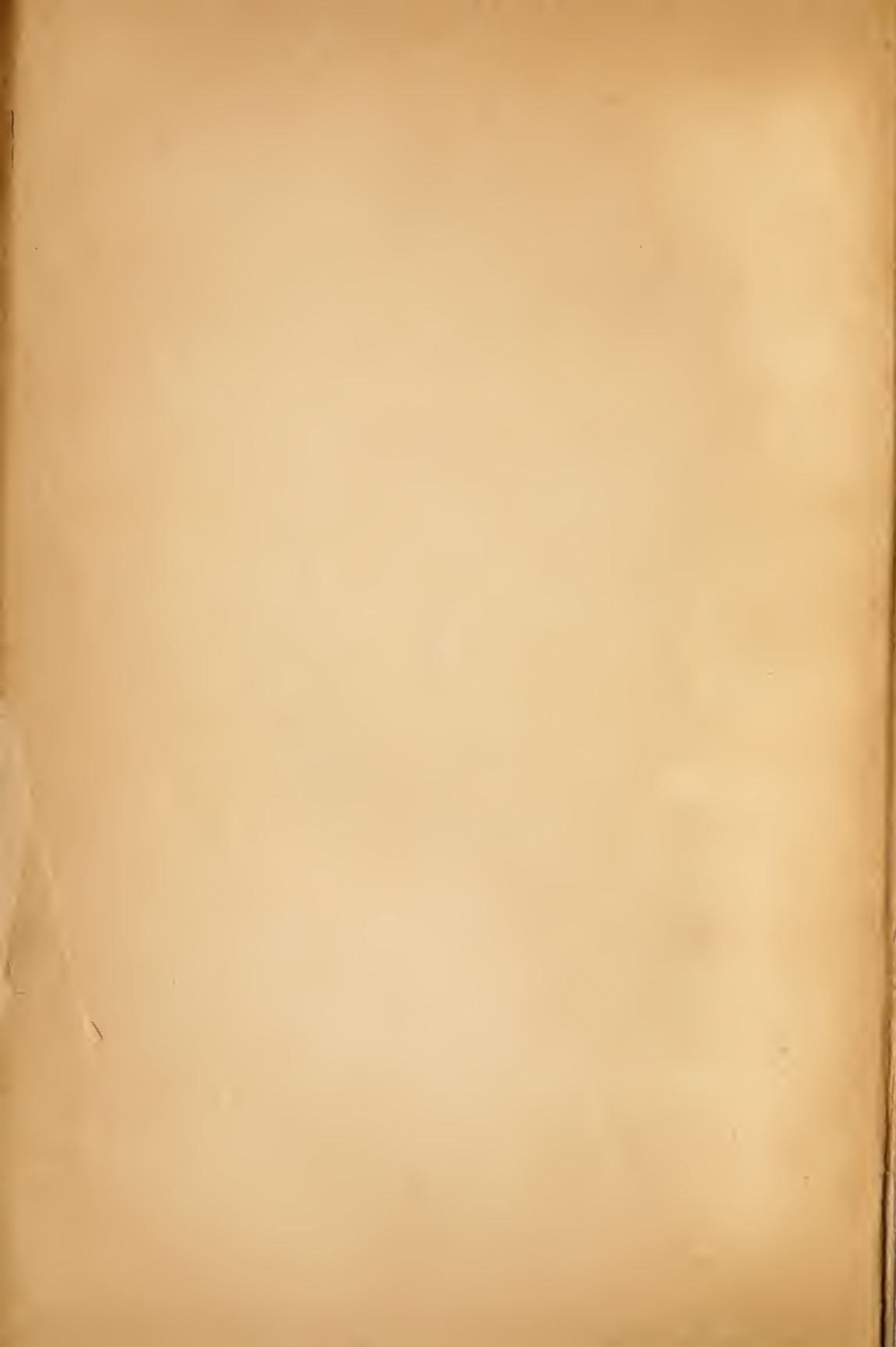
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AFRICAN ITEMS



AFRICAN ITEMS

A Volume of Verse

BY

PERCEVAL GIBBON


11



LONDON

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1903



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DEDICATION

*DEAR MADONNA, this to thee,
This my little book of rhymes,
Memories of urgent times,
Let me offer gratefully.*

*First-born of my fantasy,
A little thing, but still mine own,
Low of voice, of timid tone,
A child of my captivity.*

*Lady, judge it tenderly;
'Tis a palmer's offering,
'Tis a sacrifice I bring
Thus to my divinity.*

SOUTH AFRICA,

May, 1903.

784353



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ULTIMA THULE.

OVER the rolling ocean's rim,
 Away below the line,
Where fathoms deep the ghoulish swim,
And the tiger-shark, gray, gaunt and grim,
 Basks with his pilots nine,
We know of an island, you and I,
A gossamer cloud in a summer sky,
Where the dreams of faery do not die,
 And the isle is yours and mine.

Girt with a strip of silver sand,
 And a filigree fringe of brine,
Is a land where the virgin lilies stand,
A choir of vestals, hand in hand,
 Knee-deep in jessamine ;
Where the roses riot o'er pastures broad,
And the ferns foregather on shaded sward,
Where the kingly bee and the butterfly lord
 Sit throned on the fragrant vine.

Do you forget the dainty craft

Wherein we sought that utmost isle ?

Trimmost of clippers, fore and aft,

For wave to cradle or wind to waft

O'er many a shining mile ;

When the day was bright and the breeze was
light,

When the squalls came out of the sky at night,

When we drove like a gull through moonshine
white,

Or a hawk o'er the hooded Nile.

Do you forget the Isle of Fays ?

You were a princess and I a knight.

I crept to your side by dangerous ways,

And kissed your eyes till you woke in amaze

To the dawn of a new delight.

Right royal were you on your canopied throne,

In white and purple, with golden zone,

And we ruled a land that was all our own

The space of a summer night.

Over the edge of the outer sea,

Long leagues below the line,

Is the land where our freighted fancies flee,

The goal of our dreamy Odyssey,

A land that is yours and mine ;

An island mottled with green and gold,
Ruled by a princess seven years old,
And warded well by a warrior bold,
A knight of summers nine.

HOME THOUGHTS FROM AFRICA.

DEAREST, my heart is in mourning,
My soul is in pain,
And I yearn to the hills and the heather
And the sea beach again ;
To the rain-riven crags of the mountain,
Close under the lea,
Where the gulls go up to the ledges
And down to the sea.
From this land of the limitless vistas
And hard iron skies,
Where the veldt and the clouds fade together
Out of the range of the eyes,
I long for the shouting Nor'Easter,
The salt of the gales.
Dear, send me to comfort my exile,
A word out of Wales !

Is it all as we knew it together ?
Is it yet as of yore ?
Do the breakers, the crested free-lances,
Gallop up to the shore
With their tumult of battle and laughter ?
Can you see how the ships
Stagger seaward away under tops'ls
From the murderous lips
Of the tiger-fanged bay and its currents,
Where the galleon was drowned,
And the drift wood we stored for the winter
Came safely aground ?
And up to your hearth in the evening
Does the clamour still reach
Of the hoofs of the sea on the shingle,
The scream of the beach ?

I can taste it with lips of remembrance,
And the eyes of my love
Refashion the desolate marches,
The storm drift above,
The bay with its narrow horizon,
The cliffs which confine
A world that leaves nothing to heaven,
Your world, dear, and mine !
The beach, like a glistening gangway,
Melts far in the gray,

And hastening from sand into silver,
 So trembles away;
While the shawls of the cockle-wives gleaming,
 Red drops on the haze,
Are like blood on a priestly apparel,
 Assaulting the gaze ;
And yonder, far out and hull under,
 Scarce seen for the foam,
Some prodigal child of the ocean
 Goes seaward and home.
There are rocks, too, strewn widely to westward,
 By weed overgrown,
A river cascading in granite,
 Tempestuous stone,
Where the charge of the breakers is shattered,
 Their crest overcast,
And the raiders that leagured our fastness
 Are broken at last.

I can see in the deeps of my fire
 Our cave in the rocks,
Whence we watched the white horses stampeding
 In strenuous flocks ;
And the seventh wave is ever the biggest,
 Deep-bosomed and bright,
A phantom of luminous opal
 That froths into white.

And he thunders a saga in passing,
For you and for me,
Of the wonderful doings out yonder
At large in the sea.
Then evening walks over the waters,
Like Christ on the lake,
And strides past the beach and the marches
With night in its wake.
I wonder will you have forgotten
How oft and again
We strove with the night for its secret,
Nor wrestled in vain?
Two children that probed the eternal,
And strong in our youth,
With God for a kindly familiar,
So won to the truth.

Dearest, I think you'll remember,
When heart-deeps are stirred,
The love which we bore one another
That needed no word.
'Twas a part of the life that possessed us,
Pervaded the days,
And though childhood be reft of its treasure
That memory stays.
As the scent of the incense inhabits
An altar of old,

As honour is strong and immortal
 When the ashes are cold,
One dream is the friend of my exile,
 Nor lapses nor pales :
Your face that exulted to seaward,
 Home yonder in Wales !

MOOIMEISJES.

I MIND me of a morning while the mountains yet
 were gray,
And the fetlocks of our horses splashed in dew along
 the way,
Ere the sun was in the saddle for the half-way house
 of day,
And we rode to Mooimeisjes in the morning.

There was Jim and I and Kafir Jack and all the other
 boys,
And we waked the kloofs in echo to our laughter and
 our noise,
For we sloughed the cares of living as we doffed our
 corduroys,
To ride to Mooimeisjes in the morning.

Oh, the little sun-swamped hollow where the little
village lay !

Mooimeisjes, where we are gathered, workers all, to
take our play ;

And it lent its patch of purple to our leaden everyday,
When we rode to Mooimeisjes in the morning.

But I mind me of a morning that was misty-like and
drear,

When the earth was sick with sadness, and there
droned upon the ear

The rumble and the thunder of the gun-wheels in the
rear,

As we rode to Mooimeisjes in the morning.

There was Jim and I and Kafir Jack and each one did
his share,

Till we saw the rooftrees blazing where our gentle
memories were ;

And I know, despite our handiwork, our hearts were
over there,

With crippled Mooimeisjes in the morning.

AN ANSWER.

YESTERDAY you had a song
I could not but choose but hear,
'Twas *Oh, to be in England*
Now that April's there !
But I have found a new refrain
I cannot choose but sing,
'Tis *Oh, to be in Africa*
Now Summer's on the wing !

Yesterday we languished
For loaded boughs of may,
And largesse of the hawthorn
That April flings away ;
But foundering in the sunset,
To watch the kopjes melt,
And see the wacht-a-bitje bloom
That gleams across the veldt.

Yesterday we yearned for
The breath of English fields,
The note of life triumphant
That English April yields.
But I've a longing for the kloofs
Where red-plumed aloes stand,
And calling to my heart I hear
My Foster-Mother-Land.

THE DEAD MAN.

THERE lies a corpse in the open,
And the blood dries on the stones,
For I shot once to drop my man,
And again to still his groans.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
But I dared not hear his groans.

His lips went blue and heavy,
And the light leaked from his eyes.
All grew still about him
Save the drip, drip, drip, and the flies.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
The thirsty hum of the flies!

Gray and green were underfoot
And hot blue overhead,
But the air and the earth and the sky
seemed full
Of the presence of the dead.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
The awful pomp of the dead.

There was blood on the points of the grasses,
And thick blood at the roots,
On the butt of the gun I shot him with,
And splashes on my boots.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
His blood was on my boots.

I left him, dead and sprawling,
Mantled with swarming flies,
With the voiceless prayer on his features,
For I could not close his eyes.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
But the horror of his eyes !

What cry was that in the stream bed,
What wail from the rush-grown spruit ?
Surely a ghoulisn carrion-fowl,
For my dead man lies mute.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
So limp he lies and mute.

What eyes were those in the tree shade,
That grew in the air and blazed ?
Nought but the eyes of a ravening beast
For my dead man's are glazed.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
So empty and so glazed.

What crossed the drift behind me
And followed up the hill ?
Only a lion that snuffs the blood,
For my dead man lies still.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
So dreadful and so still !

What breath was that on my forehead
That blew in the still of the sun ?
The breath, it may be, of a waking breeze,
For my dead man has none.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
For my dead man has none.

What claps me on the shoulder,
As it would have me come ?
Only the twig of a drooping branch,
For my dead man lies numb.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
So loose he lies and numb.

What hand shows there in the heavens,
Spanning the clouds and the light ?
'Tis the radiant track of a straying beam,
For my dead man's are tight.

Lord, have mercy upon us ;
He clutched and shut them tight.

What dread is cold upon me,
What doubt has me in thrall ?
No fear of death or after death,
For my dead man knows all.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
For I have shown him all.

What sound comes up with the evening
As though it toned a knell ?
It may be a voice or a fever-dream,
But my dead man could tell.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
He knows and he could tell.

TO A BOER LEADER.

WE have spared to use the rifle when ye ran in
broken herds,

We've spared the voice of triumph—spare ye now
the bitter words!

Ours the conquest, but we veiled it; ours the song
and we were dumb,

That the Peace we wooed in battle unreluctantly
should come.

Have we wreathed disdainful laurels, forced the
homage of the knee?

Wrenched from death an utmost trophy to adorn our
victory?

Or, ambassadors for progress, waged we war that war
might cease,

Striving still to vanquish strife, as courtly cavaliers of
peace?

All your bullets could not check us—will you stay us
now with speech,

Opening hostile lips in warfare while ye close the
Mauser breech?

“Though our flag shall fly no longer, still our stern traditions stand!”

Is it thus ye teach the people while ye offer us the hand?
Nigh three years ye fought in honour, warding off the bitter end ;

Long enough to fight with Britain ; time enough to call her friend.

Bold indeed ye were to face her, eye to eye and brow to brow ;

Where you braved our fire in silence, will you need the muzzle now ?

Empires ran to call us comrade, but our mates were ever few ;

Britain's friendship ! How they sought it, and we offer it to you ;

Give it freely, bid you take it, hawk it at your very door,

Casting down what kings petitioned on the threshold of the Boer.

Dare ye leave it unaccepted, this the greatest gift of earth,

When upon your very bodies we have proved its priceless worth ?

'Tis a lien upon the future, empery of all the South ;
And you'd cast the guerdon from you, with a bitter word of mouth !

CONVALESCENCE.

THE sun has kissed me on the brow,
The gentle morning lends me breath :
I feel like Lazarus of old,
Whom Jesus raised from death.

And all the Spring's reviving green,
Ambitious of an early bloom,
Is hand-in-hand with me to-day,
Uprising from the tomb.

Ah, had you cloistered been like me,
A denizen of aching dark,
You'd see a rose on every bush,
In every bird a lark.

For I have dwelt alone with fear,
And I had taken pain to wife ;
So now I quaff in eager draughts
The heady wine of life.

Dear world, restore me to thy breast,
The mother-breast for which I yearned,
Thy child that strayed away with death,
Thy Prodigal returned.

KOMANI.

RUNS Komani ever ?
Weep the willows still ?
Gleam the grass-fires nightly
Wreathed upon the hill ?
Comes the summer singing ?
Tiptoes yet the spring ?
Tell me of Komani—
Tell me everything.

For yonder by Komani
I left my lady fair,
Who smiled for ever under
Her aureole of hair—
Smiled and would not hearken,
Heard and would not smile.
I turned me from Komani
A long and weary while.

Often by Komani
I heard my lady's name
Amid the tinkling ripples,
And is it still the same ?
Or goes Komani voiceless
Where music used to be,
Forgetful of my lady,
As once she was of me ?

KOODOO OUTSPAN.

WE were camped at Koodoo Outspan,
Lay in laager all night long,
Heard the river strive and bluster
And the frogs in chorus strong ;
Kaffir Jack was singing with them
Some forgotten gutter-song—
Something crude and old and ugly,
Some poor spirit's mean conceit—
And the burden of the singing
Was remembrance bitter-sweet—
Visions of the lighted windows,
Echoes of the ringing street.
So we listened, each responding
To the sorry singer's call,
Wanton hearts and souls of quiet ;
But one symbol ordered all,
Voiced in that uncouth evangel
Of the London music-hall.
Old remembrance yoked us down,
Clinkered years to flame were fanned,
Till we heard the women's voices
And the cadence of the band,
Till we saw the crowded pavement
And the lights along the Strand.

In the dwindling, dying chorus
Memory found a counterpart ;
Every note that edged a discord
Was a peg to hang a heart ;
Ghosts of foundered promise answered
To the Cockney's tinkered art.

So we lay at Koodoo Outspan,
Lay and pondered all night long,
And the placid night was troubled
With a murmured plaint of wrong ;
Earth gave back a mournful echo
To the blatant gutter-song.

JIM.

FROM the Kei to Umzimkulu
We chartered to ride,
But before we reached Umtata
Jim turned in and died.
By Bashee I buried Jim.
Ah, but I was fond of him,
An' but for the niggers grinning,
I'd—yes, I'd have cried.

'Twas a weary trek through Griqualand,
And me all alone ;
Three teams and a dozen niggers
To boss on my own.
And I felt a need for Jim ;
It was just the job for him,
Hazin' the teams and the niggers,
Hard grit to the bone.

I lost a load at Kokstad :
An axle fell through ;
I hadn't heart to tinker it,
So pushed on with two.
If I'd only had old Jim !
Axles never broke with him ;
But I never could handle waggons
Like Jim used to do.

I came to Umzimkuku
With a pain in my head ;
I ought to ha' bought med'cine,
But I liquored instead :
Never used to drink with Jim ;
There's a girl that asked for him,
But the jackals root at Bashee,
An' Jim, he's dead !

BLUE PETER.

GOOD-BYE, chum !

It's hard to part, but it had to come ;
And you'll think of your mate a little yet
When the pilot's dropped and the watch is
set,
Won't you, chum ?

Good luck, friend !

I always knew it was bound to end,
For the voyages together we said should be
Are not for the likes of you and me ;
So fair winds, friend.

So long, mate !

We were lucky to meet, and this is fate ;
Life had never a lot to spare
For sailormen, and I've had my share
In you, my mate.

ON THE HILLTOP.

LAY the basket tenderly,
Gently, sweetheart mine ;
Sink the sun and whelm the world,
But never jolt the wine ;
Never jolt the wine, love,
Grape or better brew ;
Never mar the joys that are,
But seize the hour's due.

Sit you where the grasses
May rustle in your ears,
And red-cockaded aloes
Stand round like grenadiers—
Swaggering grenadiers, love,
That nod to you and me,
And seem to say, " If that's your way,
It is as it should be !"

Yon's the world beneath us,
Sour and stale and gray,
Like a sorry vintage
We opened yesterday—
Opened yesterday, love,
Poured and drank our fill ;
But though we quaffed a brimming draught
The lees are with us still.

Leave the dregs awhile, then,
Leave the world below,
And smile upon the serious way
The serious people go—
The silly serious people, love,
Our merry fiend reviles ;
Because they grow so fat on woe
They cannot climb to smiles.

See, over the horizon,
The radiance leaking through,
And mark the little baby cloud
That sails athwart the blue—
The opal and the blue, love,
On feathery-silver wings,
As though to ply 'twixt earth and sky
With sweet imaginings.

There a breeze goes skipping,
Truant from the sea,
Flirting with the tree-tops,
Fickle wooer he—
Swift and ready wooer, love,
First-born child of joy ;
Pass the fame and dare the shame :
Love's the only ploy !

I'm the great cock-angel
The Masters always saw,
And you're the little lily thing
That Lippo meant to draw—
Fra Lippo meant to draw, love,
And surely Lippo knew
The groping mind of human kind,
The Prior's niece—and you !

Heaven's on the hilltop,
Heaven's yours and mine,
Throned and glad and glorious—
But gently with the wine ;
Gently with the wine, love !
This my toast shall be :
“ May you live a thousand years,
And die of love for me ! ”

BUSHMAN PAINTINGS.

THE armed mimosas throng to hide
 The gapped hillside,
Where, shrined below the grim berg's heart,
There burgeoned fitfully and died
 An olden art.

The velvet darkness like a pall
 Withholds it all,
But where the torches leap and gleam
Lives suddenly upon the wall
 A frantic dream.

Wonderful figures swarm upon the stone,
 Like brown leaves strown
Athwart some upland slope of windy veldt :
Live as the flame creates them, whirled and
 blown,
Swim forth and melt.

Whelmed hosts that scatter at the charge and
fly,
Or stand to die,
Exultant armies, steeped in battle-red,
The hurricane of mace and assegai,
The trodden dead.

Long buried loves thrown off the years' restraint,
Eager and quaint,
Battling to strip their age-old garb of gloom,
Immortal by this witchery of paint,
Waifs of the tomb.

And from the shadow tortured faces rise
With dreadful eyes ;
Red-handed spectres straying from their pain,
Seeking with sullen hate that never dies
Their dead again.

Here the low huts are floating on the grain
That waves the plain,
And here are cattle pastured to the knees.
Peace broods unfretted o'er the still domain
And prosperous ease.

Lo, 'tis a world that crowds the rugged wall ;
The cavern small

By virtue of this wonderwork is rife,
Like the arched purlieus of a kingly hall,
 With pulsing life.

And what of him who, dreaming here alone
 Upon the stone,
Contrived a magic 'mid the shadows dim
To thus immortalize a life long flown—
 Ay, what of him?

Life was a niggard, grudging him a part,
 And in his heart
He strove for freedom 'neath his load of wrong ;
God, for his weakness, armoured him with art,
 And he was strong.

Hated and hunted, murderously sought,
 The artist wrought,
Drawing the gloom about him like a hood,
Abject, but godlike in the instant thought
 That all was good.

Doomed and abhored, inured to crawl and cower,
 This was his dower :
To build a world apart, and, throned on high,
To hold the splendour of a crowded hour,
 Shrined for the eye.

See his battalions swarm at his behest
 Behind his crest !
See how his Amazulu foemen give and fall !
See life and dreamland yield him of their best,
 Tyrant of all !

Painting enraptured on the studied stroke,
 Like a cast cloak
Fear and affliction from his shoulders fell.
There died the savage, here the artist woke,
 Answering the spell.

Is this not great, to hold a potent charm
 That guards from harm
All that in man approaches the sublime,
Folding the spirit with a mighty arm,
 Immune from time ?

His was the gift to know and love the best,
 And so divest
A partial glory of its grosser part,
Prizing alike the guerdon and the quest ;
 And this is art.

Weakest of men, shaped newly from the clod,
 This friend of God,
This woodland orphan, kin to every beast,
Of all who down the aisles of laurel trod
 Was not the least.

Glance at his picture, floating as on air :
That was a prayer,
A clutch at God, an offering humbly spent,
And for the soul of him who wrought it there
A sacrament.

TABLE MOUNTAIN.

THE Mountain fronts the city and the sea,
Serene, inscrutable, with patient brow,
A monument to unremembered times,
To loves and losses long forgotten now,
And pregnant with the morrow's mystery.

Here, ere the earth was old, its level crest
Looked down on tranquil beaches yet untrod,
Held high dominion o'er the hollow deep
Ere ever Israel's clans were lost to God,
And saw the eagles gathering in the west.

And wind-bound galleons, edging off the shore,
Armadas heading for uncharted seas,
Beheld the Mountain, frowning from afar,
Serene above the rain-beladen breeze,
And marked an omen in the face it wore.

All things the Mountain knoweth and hath seen,
From that first dawn when God said, 'It is good !'
Down through the years. The brief usurping days
Passed in review before it where it stood ;
All earth and ocean were its wide demesne.

Brother, when thou and I, in course of years,
Are gathered to our fathers and forgot,
Yon iron head will stand immovable,
As in the days when thou and I were not,
A mute memorial of our joys and tears.

JAN VAN RIEBECK.

WHERE the mountain, level-crested, holds the moon
in long eclipse,

Where the waters, lover-hearted, lingered at the city's
lips,

Where the lighted windows beckon to the lanterns on
the ships ;

Where along the dockside tethered ride the vessels in
array,

Brown and scarred with heavy weather, white and
worn with wayward spray,

Hither came Mynheer van Riebeck, from the Maas
to Table Bay.

Lonely shore and desert beaches, woods that fringed
the waters' rim,

Sad, unhomely ! And above it frowned the mountain
dour and grim ;

Ay, it all seemed very hopeless. Had it any hopes
for him ?

Did he ponder ere he landed, with an angry heart and
sore,

“ Here’s the place to bury honour ; here is failure’s
open door,”

Or, with faith and brisk rejoicing, did he straightway
go ashore ?

But, methinks, I see him building, earnest heart and
busy hand ;

One by one the little houses rise along the yellow
strand,

Till a little township clusters where the galleons make
the land.

And amid the low mimosas, stealing higher day by
day,

Grows the Kerk, God’s house in exile, where the
sturdy burghers pray,

While the fort, squat-walled and warlike, hurls its
menace o’er the bay,

And the mothers and the maidens—I can see them at
their toil,

Coaxing into fruitful service little plots of savage
soil,

With an anxious eye to noonday, lest the dinner chance
to spoil.

And amongst them, helping, guiding, to and fro on
eager feet,
Here a word to check the wayward, there a smiling
nod to greet,
Father, pastor, and commander, goes the Surgeon of
the Fleet.

Till at length below the mountain, where the thorn-
mimosas grew,
Stood the town amid its gardens, with the water
running through,
And the guns upon the ramparts, where the flag of
Holland flew.

Then he set himself to govern, dealt the law as best
might be,
Drove his holding further inland from the village by
the sea,
Served with straight and due obedience, under God,
the Company.

Thus Van Riebeck laid the keystone ; and, I wonder,
did he guess,
“ Shall my handiwork bring honour ? Have I striven
to success ? ”
Surely in the winds and waters God Himself would
answer, “ Yes.”

At the dawning of dominion Jan van Riebeck looked
to noon,
Strove for Africa's awaking, asking God no other
boon
Save, lest he should never see it, that his tree might
blossom soon.

Better than the golden harvest, better than the
burdened tree,
Was the sowing of Van Riebeck for an empire yet to
be,
When the sturdy flag of Holland was the master of
the sea.

SEA-FARERS.

THE steamers that put from the Clyde,
And the whalers that sail from Dundee,
Go forth in their season on top of the tide
To gather the grist of the sea,
To ply in the lanes of the sea.

By fairway and channel and sound,
By shoal and deep water they go,
Guessing the course by the feel of the ground
Or chasing the drift of the floe,
Nor'west in the track of the floe.

And we steer them to harbours afar,
At hazard we win them abroad,
Where the coral is furrowed by keels on the bar,
And the sea-floor is swept by the Lord,
The anchorage dredged by the Lord.

By the placid, palm-skirted bayou,
By coasts that are drear and forlorn,
We follow the courses the Admirals drew
In the days when they doubled the Horn,
When Drake lost a month off the Horn.

And what of the cargo ye bring
For the venture ye bore overseas?
What of the treasure ye set forth to wring
At peril of billow and breeze,
In spite of the billow and breeze?

Oh! we carry the keys of the earth,
And the password of empire we bear;
Wherever the beaches held tokens of worth
We 'stablished your sovereignty there,
We planted your flag over there.

And the guerdon for blood ye have shed?
The glory that haloes your name?
Oh! a grave where the dipsey is dim overhead,
And the rudderless echo of fame,
A chip from the flotsam of fame.

THE VELDT.

CAST the window wider, sonny ;
Let me see the veldt
Rolling grandly to the sunset
Where the mountains melt,
With the sharp horizon round it,
Like a silver belt.

Years and years I've trekked across it,
Ridden back and fore,
Till the silence and the glamour
Ruled me to the core :
No man ever knew it better ;
None could love it more.

There's a balm for crippled spirits
In the open view,
Running from your very footsteps
Out into the blue,
Like a waggon track to heaven,
Straight 'twixt God and you.

There's a magic, soul-compelling,
In the boundless space,
And it grows upon you, sonny,¹
Like a woman's face,
Passionate and pale and tender,
With a marble grace.

There's the sum of all religion
In its mightiness ;
Wingèd truths, beyond your doubting,
Close about you press.
God is greater in the open ;
Little man is less.

There's a voice pervades its stillness,
Wonderful and clear ;
Tongues of prophets and of angels,
Whispering far and near,
Speak an everlasting gospel
To the spirit's ear.

There's a sense you gather, sonny,
In the open air ;
Shift your burden ere it break you :
God will take His share.
Keep your end up for your own sake ;
All the rest's His care.

There's a promise, if you need it,
For the time to come ;
All the veldt is loud and vocal
Where the Bible's dumb.
Heaven's paved with gold for parsons,
But it's grassed for some.

There's a spot I know of, sonny,
Yonder by the stream ;
Bushes handy for the fire,
Water for the team.
By the old home outspan, sonny,
Let me lie and dream.

VOICES OF THE VELDT.

PIET COETZEE, *loquitur*.

LAND ! I will show you land ; mile upon mile
Of ridge and kopje, bush and candid waste,
Sun-drowned and empty, tacit as the sea,
Belted about with the horizon line
That saws the clouds ; gray, green, and brown,
And over all the blank and curving sky.
Is it not still ? And with the sacred calm
Of cool church shadows, where one speaks and moves
As though God spied upon one ; and all things—
Trespassing sunbeams, spiders, swarming motes,
The profile of a woman at her prayers,
The tang that rules the sermon, one's own thoughts—
Go bowed below a dread significance.
You know the feeling ; but the veldt, my veldt,
Is more than any church, more vastly still
Than gray cathedrals drowsing down the years,
More fraught with solemn meanings and dim dreams

Than any storied hive of shaveling saints.
Still, did I say? Well, still it surely is,
And yet it hath a voice, its mood of sound,
As prophets, meanly meditating, start
From torpor into fired utterance.
On its occasion it will speak in tones
That thundered first of all on Sinai.
The voice of all the world and all the sky
Poured through the tempest-trumpet, and, between
The drum of sullen strength and passion's shrill,
Riding above the thunder and the wind,
There comes at last the still small voice of God.
And it will speak sometimes, far off and clear,
Aloof, unflushed, ungilded, calm, superb,
The voice of angels at the judgment-seat,
Impartial, cold exponents of the law.
And then it chants! O morning stars in song,
O hills in choir triumphant, ringing earth,
And dome of shuddering echoes, hush and hear!
It has the anthem laid upon its lips
Which all creation sang at the seventh dawn,
And God heard, smiling, saying: 'It is good.'
And in wild breezes, ere the timid Spring
Quite flings her draperies apart, and dares
Her naked foot of blessing on the turf,
Her naked breast of promise on the air,
It pipes, like that goat-footed god of Greece

Beside his stream, pillowed on life itself,
And sometimes like the potent piper who
Charmed hell to hush its dreary agony.
Ay, it has music. Ere I stood as high
As that big bleating rascal mid the ewes
(A sjambok's badly needed in the kraal),
I had long parley when the sun came up,
And when he smouldered down with nameless
things,

With souls set free of earth and gracious ghosts
Yet due to earth, with things unborn and dead,
With God and other gods, and something kin
To Satan, and he spoke me best of all.
You say you dream, too ; that is why I tell
Just what I feel and what I'm sure I know.
A heathen ! I, an elder of the Kerk !
Well, I'll not plead. It seems so clear to me
That as God in His image fashioned man,
So is the soul of nature of His soul,
The voice of nature to His accent tuned.
A heathen, that I love the vocal veldt !
Well, heathen let it be.

Yes, that's the house,
With thatch the colour of the mellow earth ;
My homestead, and it ought to frame my life
(You'll say), and clip the picture at the verge,
Just where the scene leans to pure excellence.

Those are the kraals below it, where my boys
Have habitation, creatures of my soil,
My free-tongued serfs, my merry-minded slaves,
The dusty sons of dust that dog their dam,
Bleating to suckle, hanging at the teat,
New born of earth, yet earthy, heart and head,
And the soul muddy from the moulding-box.
A pretty house ! Well, when I broke the sod
To lay its base I had no thought at all
Of fair proportion—built not for the eye,
But rather for the weather—but I toiled
From plans my mind held, and the mind was wise
In subtle structures of the crag and knoll,
In easy contours of the kop and kranz,
And knew the background, klip and kloof and spruit,
That I must set my house in. Well, it grew,
Not evilly, but modestly, and apt
To its great neighbourhood, the solemn hills,
The tortured boulders and the jostling bush,
And deferential to the eternal veldt.
You see its windows underneath the eaves
Over the stoep, darkling like dying eyes,
And that one touch of colour at the door,
Like blood on patient lips ? Not of design,
Not of deliberate craft or skill of mine,
Things grew to fitness ; till the house at length
Was like a man that battles not with God,

Nor with God's world, but yields below the law,
And schools himself to strengthen yet the strong,
And supplement the force of the machine.
So the veldt guides me, pulses in the blood,
Quickens the arm and clogs the clucking tongue,
And planes the purpose to a sober mean.
I tell you, friend, that freedom of the soul
Dwells in the soul's compulsion : we
Are most enfranchised when God fetters us,
Or sets the yoke of something great to guide,
As this great veldt does guide and govern me.
I am with him who saw (that Shakespeare's man)
On everything a holy text engraved,
In everything God's finger scribing plain.
A heathen ! Ay, we heathen only know
The little value of old tales retold,
The small avail of ancient miracles,
And the great worth of God's own testimony.
You'll come to coffee ? There's a kind of thanks,
A grace bestowed, a hospitality
In suffering little benefits. You'll come ?
The Tante sees few folks these later days,
And loves to make a business of a guest.
We Boers, you know, or, rather, you are told,
Are rugged people, parted from the beasts
In that we go in clothes, and work and pray.
Come once and try us. Need has pared away

Much of the harness of the city life,
And if equipment's wanting here and there,
The toys of luxury but few and worn,
You'll find the ancient tools in good repair
With which man ploughs his pathway through the
world.

And, come to think of it, 'tis scarcely hard
Or ill-befallen that a man should pay,
With none but Nature's currency, his debt,
Purchase, with sweat and muscle-strain, his bread,
Ransome his life with healthy eye and hand,
Build up his throne with honesty and faith.
Ay, gold can do it, but it does not give
The relish of achievement ; does not teach
A man to be a king ; does not confer
God's privilege to say that it is good.
Think ! Ere I ran alone, I saw the men
Laager the waggons hurriedly and stand
To outface death and torture, cheat black doom
With a mere ecstasy of courage, scoff
While all the kloofs sent kaffirs out in clouds
And seething volumes, and the hills were crowned
With assegais. I saw that fight,
And watched my father smiling o'er the sights
And crooning to himself as he dealt death ;
I sat beside my mother where she crouched
Loading the guns and handing them, and played

At marbles with the bullets, till she paused
And looked upon me gravely. Then she smiled
And kissed me once, and bade me still be good.
And so, kissing and smiling, lapsed from life
The only warrior of us all that fell.
It sets a newer mark on life and death,
A cheaper price, a memory like that,
And discounts much a man is prone to love.
This is the Vrouw Coetzee ; Katje, *mij vriend*
Will kaffee trink bij ons ; is all toe recht ?

LITTLE THINGS.

THERE never grew a flower yet
But where a flower ought to grow ;
THERE never strove an eager stream
But where a stream was due to flow :
Our world was ordered even so.

THERE never fell a sparrow yet
But there was need that it should die ;
No shred of cloud goes wafting up
But has its errand in the sky,
Its great or little craft to ply.

There never grew a sorrow yet
But served its purpose in the heart ;
There comes no pain with empty hands
And nought of healing in its smart :
Life's little things must play their part.

THE VOORLOOPERS.

THEY hasten to their heritage,
The guerdon of their days,
To labour long and wearily
For scanty gold or praise ;
To toil unseen and overmuch,
And if their meed be fame,
To carve themselves an epitaph
To mark their place and name.

They hasten to their heritage,
The right to bridge and build,
To serve among the journeymen,
To suffer with the guild ;
To plan the work and found it fair,
And ere 'tis gable-high,
To pass the trowel to the next,
And turn aside to die.

They hasten to their heritage,
The tender and the tried ;
Each tide beholds them outward bound,
God wot, the field is wide.
They bring the best of heart and hand,
Of blood, and breed, and birth ;
Their graves upon our frontiers lie
To testify their worth.

They hasten to their heritage,
The feeble and the fain ;
They bring the best of youth and hope
To garner age and pain,
To glean the dole of little thanks,
To suffer and be dumb,
To die when duty names the man--
And still their cohorts come !

THE HOBNAILED TROUBADOUR.

LET us hence from the throttle of streets,
The lean-throated life,
And the barren unrest,
And the turbulent riot that cheats
The heart in the breast,
With its pantomime aping of strife.
It is war in the town—
Always war, and no aim in the fray.
Men frown,
Men bluster and bray,
And a madness is lord of the day.
'Tis a profitless while
Since the wind had his will of my hair,
And I saw the earth smile
Like a child
Exulting in rapturous air,
And the wild
Slim grasses brush cheeks by the river,
Like virgins a-quiver
Because a boy-breeze took his path
By their tree-cloistered bath.

I will roam
To my love in the wilderness dwelling,
Who waits
Till my voice at her gates
Shall be telling :
“ I am home, I am home ! ”

There's a road that runs clear to the sky,
And tangles and loops
Like a braid on the breasts of the hills,
And clambers on high,
Then poises and swoops
To the ramparted valley that stills
The song of the rock-channelled streams ;
And dawdles and dreams
'Twixt mimosa and aloe and gum,
And it calls me to come.
So forth, then, I fare,
A troubadour, hobnailed, but free
As a ghost of the air.
The sign of the beautiful star
Through the fret of a tree,
Where the tongues of the wilderness are,
Is the hostel for me.
As a red jewel glows
In an opulent midnight of hair,
My wood-fire throws

Hot eyes on the night, and it guides
Poor brethren to share
What largesse the hour provides.
And its incense in wreaths
Swims up and about, and bequeaths
Strong memories, graved in the brain,
That shall call me again.

I am done with the market and highway,
 With trinket and gaud,
And the trail of the leopard is my way
 That leads me abroad.

The spoor of the buck shall bestow me
 In woodlands afar,
And the hovering eagle shall show me
 The house of the star.

I will dwell with the bountiful morning,
 And fare with the best,

A troubadour fearlessly scorning
 The place of a guest,

A singer new come from the cities,
 Who shames not to bring

No song but the bell-echo ditties
 The waterfalls sing,

No news but the scandalous rumours
 Of white-collared crows,

No jest but the honeymoon humours
 The flame-blossom knows.

I will come to my love in her bower,
To the garden where gladness is rife,
Astride of the golden-shod hour,
Standing up in the stirrups of life.

Staff in hand and leathern scrip
On my hip,
And a tune upon my tongue
Never sung,
Till I woke the nested echoes with my
carol of the road,
The maiden hills among ;

With the chances that betide
For my guide,
Gentle fortune for my friend,
So I wend
By the paths of dream and story, through
the land of old romance,
To my journey's pleasant end.

And the welcome where I come
Is a hum
Of the bee-choir ; even so
When I go
I walk between a chorusing of welcome
and farewell,
Musical and low.

The forests loose a whisper to the wind :

“ Life is kind,”

The flowers don their coronets to tell :

“ It is well

In the woodland and the upland, on the mountain
and the plain,

In the thicket and the fell.”

I meet the loaded breezes coming bent

Down with scent ;

The dashing free-companions of the air

Stay to bear

All the sweets of wastrel Summer, all the leavings
of the Spring,

And Autumn's mellow ware.

The sap is fresh and wakeful in the tree,

And in me

Wakes rejoicing for the splendour and the
worth

Of the earth,

Brimming over with the future, loud with promise
as she waits

For the great to-morrow's birth.

Sing no more of laurelled glory,
Sing no more
Ardent tale nor ancient story
As of yore.
Set a song upon the breeze
Of the grassland and the trees,
And the miles of pearly morning and the open road
before.

Wake no more the flame and thrilling,
Ne'er again
Loose the slogan-bugles, filling
All the brain :
I will hearken to the voice
When the unseen birds rejoice,
And the mountains sing together with an echoing
refrain.

Bit no more the great war-stallions
For the raid,
Never call the grim battalions
To their trade :
I will gird me for the fray
'Twixt the darkness and the day,
When the night leads up her lances and the
morning swings the blade.

Let all be—the lust and madness !

Let all be.

I am rich in love and gladness,

I am free

As the butterflies and bees.

Fellow-citizen of these,

Welcome guest in wayside lodges, is there aught
beyond for me ?

THE NUN.

MAIDEN of the convent close
Within the ivied wall,
Say, hast thou never kissed in dreams
Or ever kissed at all ?

The waxen lilies by thy path
Are lovers every one,
White wantons to the gallant spring,
Handmaidens of the sun.

And not the meekest breeze that blows
Thy cloistered garden through
But has some blossom for a bride,
Or poising bud to woo.

Ah ! virgin heart, why thus alone
This pulsing Easter morn,
Amid the lyric pageantry,
Goest loveless and forlorn ?

For in those grave great eyes I saw
A rebel light unfold
The sad potential Magdalen
That all sweet women hold.

MIMOSA.

THE bloom of the mimosa
Between your lips and me
Withholds you like a lattice
Of golden filigree.

The thorns of the mimosa
Between your breast and me
Are like the blades of vengeance
That guard the Eden tree.

The breach in the mimosa
That gives your lips to me
Is like the breath of blessing
That sets the spirit free.

The scent of the mimosa
That rains on you and me
Is like a dear remembrance
Of bliss that used to be.

A PERSONAL NOTE.

I WONDER if you've noticed in your time
How greatness runs to seed ; and how a man—
Having within him something past the crowd,
Some leaven of the force you nickname God,
A spark, a drop, an atom of the stuff
That having made the world will break it yet—
May merge his self within the sea of fools,
Nor ever loose his power on a prey.
I knew a man who loitered through the world,
Patronized time and smiled at opportunity,
A bland Adonis foining fortune off,
A kindly, ornamental gentleman.
He handled time as, lonely in a room,
A longing novice takes the Master's brush
And dares a line upon his imagery :
Nothing at all to see, nor stain, nor gain,
But something shared with one who's sure of fame.
So with a light forefinger did my friend
Just put his casual impress on the time,

Bettering it not a whit, nor soiling him.
He faced affairs inscrutably ; ignored
The sucking currents swirling from the feet
Of little men who jumped at immortality ;
Baffled the tendency of urgent hours,
And served the general purpose of a Sphinx.
Few people knew him, and the most of those
Conceived him valueless, or at the best
Mildly unprofitable, like old-fashioned gear
One's father added to the furniture.
But there were one or two, and of them I,
Who leaned upon him, loved him, worshipped
 him,
Holding his place beneath the lee of life
Like the serene aloofness of a God.
We knew the silken strength his calm contained,
Unscabbarded the falchion of his thought,
And we were rich in what he would not give,
And loved him for the love which he withheld.
I never fancied I should find a man
Whose mere existence could have such a force
To rule my life, set reason on the lathe,
And dovetail spirit to humanity.

Say what you will—you've high authority—
Your life is raw material to your hand,
And yours it is to shape it handsomely,

Or sturdily, or vilely, as you please,
And chiefly it depends upon your palate.
If you've a mind to thrive in certain ways,
You turn it to a plague to infest the world
And pockmark every wretch it touches on.
Or else apprentice it to harlotry,
To hawk for custom in the gutter-mud,
Pitifully asking what it may not claim,
Dully accepting buffet and caress.
But there's another way to pass the time
While time is with you, harmless at the worst,
And deftly guided, subtly beautiful,
Sinking the coarse-grained purpose of the hour,
The cheap indemnity of need and mead,
Make of your life a thing all beautiful :
A jewel on the girdle of the day.
Suffer the easy blame, the solemn scorn,
Of such as root like swine for what the heaven
Ne'er gave to earth. Placid and satisfied,
Do you but set your gem to please your taste,
And live upon your unearned fund of joy.
So, like a picture shrined in Italy !
Mellowed with years and worship and rich light,
That rules its breathless generations still,
Or like a gaud that dwells on beauty's breast,
Drawing the eye to rest on marble curves,
You spend no force but such as makes for good,

Peace and bright dreams and calm divinity.
Then, rendering your jewel, when you must,
To that grim footpad, Nature, in the end,
You lapse your slender cares in this delight :
“ I only held its frailty in my hand,
I only joyed in life's virginity.”

That's not so dilettante as you'll think :
There's matter in it if you have the spoon.
But you, perhaps, still take things seriously :
I'll not advise you then. Toss up for it !

THE EXILES.

WATCH how the South-bound swallows go ;
What manner of folk are they ?
Out of the sky they came to you,
Guests of a summer day,
Born in your sheltering thatch, and bred
A fortnight's flight away.

But when your days are warm and bright,
And God shall lend them weather,
Their schooled battalions take their flight,
A thousand wings together ;
Each year the native-born go back
To flock with their own feather.

So, Mother-country, of thy sons
A many man there be
Whose lot hath cast them all abroad,
Whose hearts have stayed with thee,
Who yield thee praise from the skirts of the earth
And the fringe of the nether sea.

England, behold ! Our arms are strong,
Our shoulders broad to bear ;
All that the aliens cast on thee,
Our birthright 'tis to share ;
And when thy legions face the field,
The exiles will be there.

From every continent and sea
Our fancies homeward fly ;
Grant though we sojourned long abroad
We all come home to die,
Each like a native Englishman
In English earth to lie.

THE HARPER.

I HAVE a potion, bright as tears,
Kind as death, strong as pain ;
Reach me the harp, for the cup shall brim
 And the years are piled in vain.
Drink of the harper's wonder-brew,
Pledge in a cup of honey-dew,
Quaff, and the potion wakes for you
 Splendid days again.

I have a charm that is large as love,
Little as life, old as woe ;
Reach me the harp, and the sun shall stand,
 Winds forbear to blow.
List to the harper's magic song,
Music buoyant, wild and strong,
Born where the mountain birds belong
 And the ghosts of children go.

I have a balm that I stole from God,
Soft as pity, sweet as truth ;
Reach me the harp and I will heal
 Age and wrong and ruth.
Take of the harper's unguent, sweet
As Mary poured at Jesus' feet,
Bright as the pool where the waters meet,
 Holy as hopes of youth.

A MEETING.

THE street was muffled out of sight,
And peering like a furtive ghost,
The corner lamp had gashed the night
And made a little isle of light,
A misty atoll. Here I stood
And watched the darkness swamp its coast
In reeling tides of emptiness ;
The moon was dead, and ravelled scud
Usurped her heaven, like a tress
Escaped upon a sombre cloak.
The world was tongueless : not a tone
Of life's far orchestra was rife ;
No last faint drowsy whisper woke
A drowsy echo ; on the stone,
Marooned beneath the lamp alone,
I seemed to compass all of life.
And so I pondered, idly viewed
From out my little lighted cell,
My nowise barren solitude,
My world, that I alone imbued
With purpose, and I found it well.

And then I saw the banked night gape
About my shore ; a woman came,
And by my hermit island went.
Above her head the staggering flame
A swift uneasy radiance spent
Upon her features and her shape.
I saw no more than quiet eyes
Set in a still and gentle face,
Attuned to sober sympathy,
A calm serenity of grace,
That breathing note of purity
Which springs from love—not otherwise.
I think that for a moment's space
I met her glance and held it, then
The darkness drowned her ; from my ken
She sank, and I was lone again.
My friend, the least of little things
Have purpose—if you say so, small
As they themselves—but no one brings
A bludgeon to a needle's task
Where littleness is all in all.
We know the swollen universe
Is but a consequential mask
For little causes which disperse
The calm effects we label fate ;
And you and I but vindicate
The utmost atom's certain knack

Of building worlds, while ages hence
Its worlds may founder on a word,
Creation crumble into wrack,
Because a fancy wrought offence
And you apostrophized unheard.
It may be, now, you'll understand
Why still I cherish and retain
The glance at midnight which I took,
Like jetsam on my fretted strand,
And shrine it still within my brain.
A look—no word—a fleeting look
The time vouchsafed us ; and in that
I saw what I must treasure still—
The cause untainted that begat
The offspring of my captured will.
And this I know : that all I wrought,
Evil or good—for both are strong
To multiply and spread—I caught
That cheerless night, and they belong
Only to her whose eyes I see
Sometimes of evenings yet, and she
Shall answer at the last for me.

EVENING.

SINKS the sun in sullen glory where the mountains
meet the sky,
Red and tragic, like the passing of some old and
stricken king ;
Down the glades of sunbeams thrusting to the scarlet
clouds on high,
Silent, sudden, winged with healing, comes the
blessed evening.

Fretted, lustrous, opalescent, fire wars with climbing
fire,
Worlds in ruin glow and smoulder, crumbling in
the golden flood ;
Black the trees, like naked mourners, lift lean arms
about the pyre,
Red the mountains, swamped in splendour, triumph
in their robes of blood.

Lower, lower, dying slowly, dying strongly, falls the
sun ;
Springs of radiance, eager fountains gushing, bright-
ness, round him well ;

Priestly breezes bear the unction, shades are kneeling
one by one,
Through the gates of darkness wafted faintly tones
the passing bell.

Cloaked and shod with tender gloom, star-girdled,
hooded, pacing slow,
Like a pale and cloistered lady, thus the holy night
draws on ;
Voices of the veldt acclaim her, choiring plaintively
and low,
Earth beside her path is suppliant for her healing
benison.

BROWNING, (EX-AFRICA).

O MASTER hand of poesy,
So delicately skilled to win
From out the human violin
The very sense of gallantry,
And chill refrains that drown the ear with
 agony !

In all thy haunting minstrelsy,
What is ours, who have no part
In the heritage of art,
In beauty's calm divinity,
Save that we are kin to thy humanity ?

Dwellers in captivity,
Seeking out with wistful eyne
The silver-dim horizon line,
Girdling round our boundary,
Whence fancy passes forth to realms of
 witchery.

Rapt voice of fantasy !
What potion out of dreams distilled
Informed thee with the craft to build
These palaces of imagery,
These golden lands aglow, this flood of
pageantry,

That we, from cares of merchantry,
Amid the city's thronging ways,
May turn aside awhile to gaze
On lovely languorous Italy,
And all her grace of love and hue and
melody ?

LAURELS.

THERE is a blazoned history
That surges in my mind,
Of pageant, love, and chivalry,
That life has left behind ;
Of olden fires, long eclipsed,
That leave us cold and blind.

I read how this tall knight or that
Rode forth at early light,
And loaned his sword to every cause
Of woe that sought its right,
To prisoned maids and ladies fair,
As should become a knight.

And death and brazen victory
Alike incurred the gain
Of flowery honour and the word
Of praise that baffles pain,
And none fought unavailingly,
And no one died in vain.

So round the tale of quest and fray
 The ready laurels wreathed,
And o'er the biers of good dead men
 The note of glory breathed,
That to a later, littler life
 Their plangent names bequeathed.

But this, in chief, I mark of them,
 And troth, it makes me sigh :
Such gallant trappings overlaid
 The craft that they would ply,
So much of drum and bugle-horn
 To help them live and die.

Not hard, I think, for such as they
 To be and prove the man,
With sound embroidering the deed
 As praise and music can,
And 'twixt the toil and recompense
 So brief the easy span.

The wreath, the lady and the prize !
 Now here I count it blame
That in their halls of chivalry
 They shut the door of shame,
Lest one should try his strength too far
 And mar his knightly fame.

They went not forth as you and I,
And many men beside,
Who, deeming not of high desert,
Their utmost prowess tried,
Who, seeking but the instant gain,
As men of valour died.

I hold him but a meagre soul
Who dare not greatly fail,
Who cannot grace the fustian coat
But needs the ringing mail,
And sets the hope of victory
Above the Holy Grail.

Ah well ! they knew their business best,
And ordered life to suit ;
Timing their decorative steps
To psaltery and lute,
They went in pageant down to death
And left the singers mute.

And this remains : their way was fair,
But brief and narrow too,
And passing ere the world was ripe,
They left great things to do,
Such tasks as Bayard might not dare,
And Launcelot never knew.

Now every man in every time
Has some dim-shrinèd quest,
Some hope that fattens in lean years,
Some love that drowns the rest ;
And every one must bear the gage
Of that he holds the best.

And if I strive at utmost cost
To ends of honour fine,
By meanest ways, by darkest paths,
With never friend nor sign,
Black brow to brow with hostile fate,
The more of honour mine !

And if, o'ercome upon the road,
A vanquished man I lie,
With broken blade and miry crest
It be my lot to die
Uncomforted and unrenowned,
No smirchèd fame have I.

For that I ventured forth afoot
And lacking page and squire,
Shall it be told at length of me
My place was in the mire,
And shall it not remembered be
How far I did aspire ?

Not mine the grace of minstrelsy,
The thrill of string and reed
The sackbut and the clavicthern
That bid the people heed
There comes again a conqueror ;
But mine will be the deed.

WHAT NEED ?

WHAT need of all these verses,
This sugar-refuse speech,
The blessings and the curses,
The clink and clang of each ?
What do you learn or teach ?

I have a need of verses
To round my rough design
Of music that immerses
The pearl of thought in wine,
And makes the draught divine.

What need of all this singing,
The rhythm and the rhyme ?
Must words go ranked and ringing
The torpid soul to prime ?
Must visions march in time ?

I have a need of singing,
 To give my thought its sky,
To set it free and winging
 Where clouds and poems ply.
'Tis dear to such as I.

What need of all this dreaming,
 My architect of air,
The bubbles all esteeming
 But not the solid ware,
Not things undraped and bare ?

I have a need of dreaming
 Of houses in the air :
The crested walls and gleaming
 Are not of solid ware :
How else should joy be there ?

HOMeward BOUND

It's goodbye now to Africa, but kiss your hand again
To the upland trek and the old trade road and kop and
kloof and plain ;

There's another trek instead for us,
And a long strange road ahead for us,
But never the old home outspan, however the team
may strain.

I'm thinking now of the lonely day when first I landed
here ;

The clouds were down on the mountain—a rainy day
and drear,

And in all the voices greeting us,
And in all the people meeting us,
There was never a soul to welcome me, and never
a word of cheer.

And I'm thinking, too, of the long lean years and the
uphill fight I made,

The good grim faith in the end of it and the footing
dearly paid,

The joy and the pain and the vice of it,
The loss and the gain and the price of it,
And the jerrybuilt gods I trusted in and the darkling
ways I strayed.

But all the same, I wouldn't forego the curious things
I've seen,

The roofless nights and foodless days and the purple
in between.

It's over late to fret for it,

And the world shall pay me yet for it,

But the rough-and-tumble left me brown where the
handshake found me green.

There are many things you come to see when the final
crust is gone :

The rotting souls of splendid men and truth with
nothing on,

Life and the sorry way of it,

The world and the devious lay of it ;

Only half of them honest brawn and the rest is what
they don.

And it's fine to think, when you've time to think, of
the wonderful things you do,

With a grin for the worst, and a nod for the best, and
grit to hold you to,

Till you face your job and are one with it,

Till you tackle your share and are done with it,

Till you stand to the odds with an appetite and see the
lost fight through.

It's soft we come and hard we go, and little enough we
get,

But we win a streak of ore within that will pan out
colour yet.

With nothing in the hand and bluffing it,

With nothing in the purse and roughing it,

We play big stakes with Africa and leave the game in
debt.

And now we're leaving Africa ! Oh, kiss your hand
once more,

To the good old, tough old, grand old land that lies
beyond the shore ;

And to-night, dear heart, we'll be dreaming of it,

And to-morrow we'll be sad for the seeming of it :

There's a life and a love astern of us, but Lord knows
what before.

THE END.



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